

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
 INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BRINKLEY ON THE ABC-TV PROGRAM, "THIS WEEK WITH  
 DAVID BRINKLEY," WITH GEORGE WILL AND SAM DONALDSON  
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Now, you've barely had time to hang up your coat before they hit you with Bosnia. The -- some people in your shop are saying that air strikes, if there are any, would be step one. What would be step two?

SEC. PERRY: Well, the major step is the -- air strikes have to be considered only as a part of a larger package. As Minister Juppe has said, it's a two-track process. Peace negotiations and air strikes. The air strikes are important in -- for two reasons. First of all, they allow us to reduce the level of carnage and violence that was going on in Sarajevo by raising the price for anybody that wants to shell that city, dramatically raising the price. And secondly, they illustrate firmness and resolve and solidarity in NATO. And therefore, by that means, they help the peace process along.

MR. BRINKLEY: So you're saying step two would be negotiations? Is that what you said?

SEC. PERRY: Step two is negotiations, except they're in parallel. It's a double-track process.

MR. BRINKLEY: Tony Cordesman, who I believe you know, was here a few minutes ago. And he seemed to think that this may take a very long time. What is your view?

SEC. PERRY: Well, it depends on what it is. The peace negotiation process can take some time. They've been at it for two years now. We're trying to put new energy in that process and I believe we will succeed in doing that. It's hard to forecast whether that will go on for months. It would be optimistic, naively optimistic to think that it might be done in weeks. So I think we're talking about months.

While that's going on, we have every hopes that the air strikes will reduce the violence that's been associated with the negotiations in the past. And we also think, as I said, that they will give some acceleration to this peace process.

MR. WILL: It is at least arguable that the history of modern warfare is a history of the overestimation of air power's effectiveness to achieve political or even military ends. You heard Tony Cordesman talk about the difficulties that you knew anyway, flying high performance

MR. BRINKLEY: Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming. Pleased to have you.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you, David.

MR. BRINKLEY: You know everybody here.

aircraft under winter cloud cover into mountain valleys, chasing mobile artillery units. How dangerous is it, in your judgment, for our pilots?

SEC. PERRY: No military operation is without risk. Indeed, just Saturday, we had a mid-air collision of an F-14 and F-18 over the Adriatic, not related to this operation. Fortunately, the crew all survived that. But even in routine training operations, there are some risks associated. We've had airplanes flying air cover over Bosnia for some time now. So risks are involved, but the risks, I believe, are minimal in this operation.

We have a very high performance aircraft, the best in the world, over there, and there is a minimal air defense system that we're going against.

MR. WILL: Does Belgrade, the Serbian government, control these gunners in the hillside, and if they do, might it not be more efficient to make Belgrade a target?

SEC. PERRY: We don't know the extent to which Belgrade controls those gunners. We do know that we're better -- or we believe we're better off with a very limited and focused air strike, rather than trying to spread a general war here.

MR. WILL: An average bad day in Sarajevo is supposed to be something like 40 to 50 incoming shells. Surely 40 or 50 incoming shells would not be hard on a -- what they call a shoot-and-scoot tactic on the part of the Serbian gunners to maintain, would it?

SEC. PERRY: It will be -- the price to maintain that will become very high for the gunners when the air strikes are directed against them, for two different reasons. First of all, if the shells come in, we have -- we can deploy artillery-locating radars which will backtrack the position of the guns. And secondly, the aircraft we have, the air strike aircraft we have, are the most modern and the most precise in the world and with the best sensors.

MR. WILL: Just one technical question, then. They fire a shell and we quickly locate it. Can you give us a sense of how quickly from the shell leaving the gun we could get ordnance on that gun?

SEC. PERRY: Well, from the time of the impact, it's a matter of seconds to get the information, the coordinates, to an airplane. Then it's a question of where is the airplane relative to the gun? We have -- we, NATO has more than 160 aircraft in the fleet that's providing air cover over there. We are maintaining continuous air cover.

So if an airplane is near that area, it can be there in a matter of a minute or two.

MR. DONALDSON: Mr. Secretary, has the United States simply signed on to using air strikes through NATO if that becomes necessary? Or in fact, does this pave the way, if air strikes don't work, for further military action? And if so, under the present agreement or would you have to go back to square one?

SEC. PERRY: We are signed on to both of these tracks, intensive participation in the peace negotiations, and air strikes. The air strikes are for very limited purposes at this time. It is to stop the violence and to lend credibility to the firmness and the resolve of NATO.

MR. DONALDSON: I understand. You've told us that. But my question of course is, if air strikes don't work, if the guns still continue to fire, what then? Would we then go further, another step?

SEC. PERRY: We have many options open to us at this stage. It would not be productive, I think, to lay out all of those options or to make threats at this stage.

MR. DONALDSON: Could you --

SEC. PERRY: I have every reason to be optimistic that the moves we're taking now will be successful.

MR. DONALDSON: Could you see NATO, if air strikes don't work, simply saying, well, we tried, we did our best -- and let it stop at that?

SEC. PERRY: I think what we will be assessing is not so much the effect of the air strikes, but the results in the peace negotiations. That is the focus of our program, getting the peace negotiations going. So the question is, are we making progress in the peace negotiations, and if we're not, what actions do we have to take to accelerate those?

MR. DONALDSON: But, sir, you say it wouldn't be productive at this point. But I think many Americans, remembering the past, and probably you, too, would say that in getting into something like this, we ought to have thought through the end game, we ought to have thought what goes down the road. Have you not thought about it?

SEC. PERRY: Indeed, we have thought about it.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, then, what -- share with us what you've thought about.

SEC. PERRY: We have looked at diplomatic options; we have looked at military options.

MR. DONALDSON: We're talking military, sir.

SEC. PERRY: The military options are fairly obvious. They are, increase the intensity of the air strikes, they are, extend the air strikes to other areas. We've considered all of those. We are not looking at options which involve the commitment of U.S. ground forces to the area.

MR. DONALDSON: Let me just ask about Tailhook. Admiral Kelso, the chief of Naval Operations, has sworn that he did not see any misconduct at the Las Vegas Hilton that weekend. He was there to give a speech the weekend of Tailhook 1991.

But now a military judge has said he did, that in fact there are witnesses who say Admiral Kelso didn't tell the truth. What are you going to do about this?

SEC. PERRY: This is a -- first of all, let me say that underlying problem, which is the indication of a culture in some parts of the Navy which thought that behavior was permissible, is unacceptable to me and it's unacceptable to the secretary of the Navy. We had also, I think, I believe a failure of an investigative system, and we want to look at both of those and look at them very seriously.

Now, in terms of Admiral Kelso, we had two factors countervailing the court report. First of all, we had an inspector general's report which cleared Admiral Kelso of this, and we have the record of Admiral Kelso, 37 years of distinguished service in the Navy and a man

whom I believe is one of highest honor and highest integrity.

That dilemma, then, of reconciling these two different views is, as you can imagine, is under active consideration now by the secretary of the Navy. I expect he will give me a recommendation in a day or two as to what he should do about that.

MR. DONALDSON: But the problem, it seems to me, and apart from Admiral Kelso, is the court used that, its finding that Admiral Kelso was involved and had used improper command influence, to release people who'd been charged so that everyone gets off free, no one gets any real punishment because of Tailhook. So either you've got to determine, do you not, that Admiral Kelso, as the court said, acted improperly or you have to reinstate those cases.

SEC. PERRY: We indeed have to resolve that dilemma. I do not have a resolution of it at this time but I can assure you -- I can assure you it's a matter of very intense consideration right now by the secretary of the Navy, and he will be reporting his findings to me on that early next week.

MR. WILL: Recurring for a moment to Bosnia, it was interesting and perhaps dismaying this week that the president had a devil of a time getting Mr. Yeltsin on the telephone. Why was that? And is there a problem, this large and continuing problem with Russian sensibilities regarding our and NATO's actions against Serbian gunners?

SEC. PERRY: We start off with the belief that the Russians and the Americans have a common objective in Bosnia. Both of us want to achieve a peace agreement. Both of us want to stop that violence. Obviously we have a different view on the tactics of how that's going to be done.

MR. WILL: Well, that's a pretty high level of generality in describing the objectives. They may want the Serbians to have a peace of victory.

SEC. PERRY: We -- the tactical differences between us, I believe, are resolvable, and I believe we will see them resolved in the

weeks to come.

We have in terms of the contacting with Mr. Yeltsin, as you well know, the telephone conversation -- or the telephone line is not the only way we have of contacting the Russians. We have elaborate and complex communications systems and all of those have been operating. The telephone system was -- did not make contact for those two days.

MR. DONALDSON: Mr. Secretary, is there going to be a trade war with Japan? And if so, how will the military establishment be affected vis-a-vis its counterpart in Tokyo?

SEC. PERRY: When the Japanese prime minister was here, they discussed the trade impasse, and you heard the president and the prime minister report on that, and we do have a real problem there. At the same time, we had intense discussions with the Japanese about the primacy of our security relations with Japan. They are at -- they are well and healthy today and they will continue into the future.

MR. DONALDSON: And are you going to solve Fermat's theorem?

SEC. PERRY: (Laughs.) I'm afraid that's already been solved and so my chance to take a place in history --

MR. DONALDSON: But they didn't write it in the margin.

SEC. PERRY: They didn't write it in the margin. Had I solved it, I would have written it in the margin.

MR. BRINKLEY: Mr. Secretary, in the last report you have had, is the cease-fire still holding? We've had cease-fires before that didn't last long. This one still holding?

SEC. PERRY: I think there's some reason to be optimistic. It is holding reasonably well. The -- we had a 24-hour period when there were no casualties in Sarajevo, but I do not think we should rush to judgment about what's going to happen there. We have tough negotiations ahead of us with the Serbs; we have the peace negotiations that are still in a stalled condition.

MR. WILL: Some people would say --

MR. BRINKLEY: George, we have a few seconds left. Go ahead.

MR. WILL: Some people have said that

certain indecision in American policy regarding Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia was not convincing to the North Koreans that they had anything to worry about from the United States with regard to their compliance with inspection and other matters pertaining to their possible acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Would you hope that there'd be an echo effect, that if we take decisive action in Bosnia, it might impress the North Korean regime? And are you -- how worried are you about the North Korean regime? Is this high on your radar screen?

SEC. PERRY: I am worried, for two reasons. First of all, the North Korean government, as you know, is isolated in a very great extent from the rest of the world. And therefore, they may misread signs of resolve on the part of the Americans.

We have been unambiguously clear to the North Koreans that South Korea is an ally and that we will support them in any contingency. I believe that the -- that we should watch very, very carefully in the next week or so what happens in the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency's report on inspection compliance there and the North Korean government's reaction to that.

MR. WILL: Will we be sending Patriot missiles to South Korea?

SEC. PERRY: We have received a request from General Luck to send Patriots. I have agreed to that request. I asked General Luck to negotiate with the South Korean government the timing and the logistics aspects of the transport of those Patriots.

MR. BRINKLEY: Mr. Secretary, thank you.

SEC. PERRY: You're welcome.

MR. BRINKLEY: Thanks very much for coming.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you.

MR. BRINKLEY: Pleasure to have you.